



FACT SHEET:

Protecting Persons from Housing Discrimination Based on Actual or Perceived Shared Ancestry or Ethnic Characteristics

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO) enforces Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. § 2000d, *et seq.*, and its implementing regulations, 6 C.F.R. Part 21 (collectively, Title VI), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance from the Department. This fact sheet describes ways in which this protection covers persons who are or are perceived to be Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist, or of another religious group.

Title VI's Prohibition of Discrimination:

1. Title VI's protection from race, color, or national origin discrimination extends to persons who experience discrimination, including harassment, based on their actual or perceived: (i) shared ancestry or ethnic characteristics; or (ii) citizenship or residency in a country with a dominant religion or distinct religious identity.
2. Title VI prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin against persons of any religion, such as persons who are Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, or Buddhist, when the discrimination, for example, involves:
 - racial, ethnic, or ancestral slurs or stereotypes;
 - physical appearance, including skin color, physical features, or style of dress reflecting both ethnic and religious traditions; and
 - a foreign accent; a foreign name, including names commonly associated with particular shared ancestry or ethnic characteristics; or speaking a foreign language.
3. Any person who feels that they are a victim of discrimination based on their actual or perceived shared ancestry or ethnic characteristics, or citizenship/residency in a country with a dominant religion or distinct religious identity in a program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance from HUD, may file a complaint with HUD under Title VI. HUD will also consider the applicability of Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act, 42 U.S.C. § 3601 *et seq.*, also known as the Fair Housing Act (which explicitly prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion related to housing) and other civil rights laws and regulations when evaluating any complaint.¹



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Examples of the kinds of incidents that could, depending upon facts and circumstances, raise Title VI concerns include:

- Telling tenant applicants or prospective homebuyers that they will not like a neighborhood because there is no religious community nearby for people with similar names, appearances, accents, races, or ethnicities.
- Harassing tenants by using racial, ethnic, or ancestral slurs or stereotypes.
- Refusing to rent to persons because their name, dress, or other characteristics are associated with a certain ethnicity or ancestry.

What can a person do if they experience discrimination based on shared ancestry or ethnic characteristics?

Anyone who believes that they have been discriminated against in a HUD-assisted program or activity based on their race, color, or national origin (including shared ancestry or ethnic characteristics, and citizenship or residency in a country with a dominant religion or distinct religious identity) can file a complaint with FHEO. Individuals may send complaints to one of [FHEO's regional offices](#) or to HUD's [Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity](#). You may also file a complaint with FHEO by calling 1-800-669-9777. When you call, if you do not speak or understand English proficiently, an interpreter who speaks your language will be placed on the call. You can file a complaint with FHEO whether or not you are a U.S. citizen. HUD provides a toll-free teletypewriter (TTY) line: 1-800-877-8339. You may also ask for disability-related assistance when you contact FHEO, including reasonable accommodations and auxiliary aids and services for effective communication on matters related to your complaint.

¹ Several legal authorities explicitly prohibit discrimination in housing on the basis of religion. These include:

- **The Fair Housing Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 3601-19**

Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 (Fair Housing Act), as amended, prohibits discrimination in the sale, rental, and financing of dwellings, and in other housing-related transactions, because of race, color, religion, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), familial status, national origin, and disability. It also requires that all federal programs relating to housing and urban development be administered in a manner that affirmatively furthers fair housing.

- **[Section 109 of Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, 42 U.S.C. § 5309](#)**

Section 109 prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), and religion in any program or activity funded in whole or in part under Title I of the Community Development Act of 1974, which includes Community Development Block Grants.